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(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: MAGANBHAI P. DESAI

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## A HEROIC STRUGGLE

Elsewhere will be found a remarkable article on South African Civil Disobedience struggle that has appeared in *The New Statesman and Nation* under the caption "Gandhi's Mantle".

It was in May 1946 that an Indian Deputation from South Africa waited on Gandhiji at Valmiki Mandir, Bhangi Colony, in New Delhi, to discuss with him the situation arising out of further disabilities that were proposed to be put upon them on top of the Pegging Act. The deputation was headed by Sorabjee Rustomjee, son of late Parsi Rustomjee, and included such veteran Satyagrahis trained under Gandhiji as Mr Christopher. Gandhiji had before that opposed the Indian community inviting the natives to join them in a united anti-White front. For, that would have been exploiting the natives by the Indian community for its own ends. The natives had a far bigger stake than the Indians in Africa, but were not yet ready to launch a struggle for it. But a great awakening had come over them of late. Gandhiji had therefore no hesitation in advising the Indian deputation to join the common anti-White front: "Yes. . . . we should associate with Zulus and Bantus etc. . . . . It means you take them along when you have developed the power of non-violence. . . . One day the black races will rise like the avenging Atilla against their white oppressors unless some one presents to them the weapon of Satyagraha. But if you allow yourselves to be overwhelmed and swept off your feet it will be their and your ruin."

When the present struggle was started, some had doubts whether it would be on strictly non-violent lines because of some persons with alleged communist leanings being involved in the leadership. Manilal Gandhi was one of the doubters. With great insight he decided that the most effective contribution he could make to the cause was to purify the atmosphere of the danger of violence through self-purification, and accordingly he launched on a twenty-one day fast. It must have been a source of the deepest satisfaction to him, as to all friends and sympathizers, that his worst fears have so far been belied. In a recent letter to a friend he wrote that he was amazed by the extent to which both in method and in spirit the people had observed non-violence. "He said," the friend writes, "that his father's spirit was at work in the situation."

Non-violence often works in a mysterious way. But for Bapu's spirit, Manilal himself probably would not have been prompted to go in for a self-purificatory and all-purifying fast. It dramatized for all Gandhiji's spirit which he strongly felt at work within himself.

"What is happening clearly enough is," wrote *The New Statesman and Nation* some time back, "that the three principal non-White communities — numbering some four-fifths of the population of the Union — are learning to use their power of numbers and to use it intelligently. So far, they are not using it more than a fraction of its possible strength. But what a few thousands can do today, a few tens of thousands can very well do tomorrow. When that happens, the Whites of South Africa will be forced at last to make their choice — either to bring down their world in chaos or to concede to their non-White fellow-countrymen the elementary rights and privileges of human beings."

Valmiki Mandir,
New Delhi, 6-10-'52 PYARELAL

## "GANDHI'S MANTLE"

The wheel set spinning by Mahatma Gandhi has come full circle. Forty-five years after Gandhi used Satyagraha to protect the interests of Indians in the Transvaal and Natal, passive resistance returns to South Africa. And it returns with a weight, prestige, and promise of effectiveness which cannot be ignored even by its most arrogant enemies among the Whites. Since the end of June this year, when the national organizations of the Africans, Coloureds, and Indians in the Union opened a joint campaign of non-violent resistance to racialist laws and regulations, over 3,000 non-Whites have gone to gaol for deliberately defying one or other of the many rules of racial segregation. The courts have awarded fines: many have refused to pay; steadily, the gaols are filling up; and the flood of volunteers shows little sign of abating. On the Government side there is talk of using the lash. But the movement goes on: even if it were checked now, it has already succeeded well enough to set an unforgettable example for the future.

Few or no incidents of violence have marred this campaign. That is a tribute to the leadership of the three non-White communities — a leadership which, in political terms, stretches from

Right to Left and takes in almost every current of independent non-White opinion. So true is this, indeed, that the authorities have now found it necessary to arrest Dr. James Moroka, the moderate and "non-political" president of the African National Congress, whom they seized not at some political meeting or mass demonstration, but in his quiet surgery in the Orange Free State town of Thaba Nchu.

It might be thought that the Nationalists would take thought in good time, before this movement grows to overwhelming proportions or drives them into the fatal exasperation of using violence against non-violence. But there is no sign that the Nationalists are taking thought. That they are deeply embarrassed is clear from the threats of whipping which Swart, the Minister of Justice, is throwing about. But their general attitude is well enough shown by the words of the Johannesburg magistrate when sentencing non-White leaders to compulsory labour sentences of six months in the case of Dr. Dadoo, the Indian leader, and of four months in those of Mr Kotane, Mr Marks, and Mr Bopape, three African leaders. Arguing the case under the so-called Suppression of Communism Act, the magistrate said: "It is common knowledge that one of the aims of Communism is to break down race barriers and strive for equal rights for all sections of the people, and to do so without any discrimination of race, colour, or creed." Since the Union of South Africa was "fertile ground" for such "Communist propaganda," there must be legislation to "suppress Communism." This legislation might make "a serious inroad on the liberty of the subject," but its object was clear. "It is to stop at the earliest possible stage the fomentation of a feeling of hostility between European and non-European." This is a good sample of the topsyturvy nonsense which passes for logic in White South Africa. Having equated Communism with the struggle for equal rights — the struggle, that is, for racial harmony — the magistrate could then go on to say that legislation was needed in order to suppress Communism before it could foment racial hostility. The Nationalists, indeed, are incapable of seeing racial equality except in terms of a race war in which the Blacks would exterminate the Whites. Nor can it be denied that the harsher currents of Black nationalism which an extremist White nationalism has now set in motion may after all achieve this disaster.

If the Nationalists can think in terms of nothing better than bigger gaols and heavier sentences, the other great party of White South Africa, the United Party, remains in little better case. Its quiescence at this time is bad for South Africa and bad for itself. A minority in the United Party probably knows this; but the habits of the majority are long established and hard to move. The truth is that most members of the United Party feel themselves on the Nationalist side of this conflict rather than the non-White side. If there has to be a choice, they will choose the Nationalists; and they will choose the Nationalists in the stubborn if quite erroneous conviction that they are standing thus for civilization. Preferring not to announce this choice at a time when they are locked in another kind of conflict with the Nationalists, the leaders of the United Party simply say nothing. Yet one of the central aims of the non-White leaders — and of all who wish well to South Africa — must nonetheless be to achieve some degree of common cause with the United Party in the fight against the Nationalists. For it is the Nationalists who are the immediate danger.

With or without the United Party, this campaign seems certain to go on. It began in the face of United Party opposition, and it has continued in the face of United Party indifference. And already two important points about it have become clear. The first is that the three non-White communities have proved their ability to work together under joint leadership; and the second is that this newly-forged unity of action — overcoming marked communal hostilities in some parts of the Union — is strong enough to persist and grow stronger. Rather than withdrawing before threats of the lash and longer sentences of hard labour, rank-and-file volunteers from all three communities have continued to come forward in greater numbers. Thousands of non-Whites have seen the long tradition of quiescence under White supremacy smashed in their own personal experience: voluntarily they have suffered, and are suffering for their convictions, and they are not likely to forget it. *What a few can do today, many can do tomorrow: the history of modern India has shown that this is a snowball which rolls, and rolls larger.* Aiming at racial equality — and hence at racial harmony — it is a snowball which bears with it not only the memory of what is past, with its cruelty and waste, but also the hope of a different future, less poor and more peaceful, for the torn and miserable country which is South Africa today. (*The New Statesman and Nation*, August 30, 1952).

## THE COMMUNITY PROJECTS

[The following is the statement issued by the Akhil Bharatiya Sarva Seva Sangh, Wardha, at its meeting of 24th July, 1952 on the "Community Projects Scheme".]

It is difficult to give detailed or precise opinion on the Plan for the Community Projects since what we have is only a draft outline of the Plan. While many different items of work are found listed in the Plan, it is not stated how these will be organized, carried forward and co-ordinated. It is, therefore, possible to make only certain general observations.

2. The objectives of the Plan are not made very clear or beyond doubt. At one place the objective is indicated as "the greatest good of the greatest number". At another place it is stated that "a substantial increase in agricultural production is the immediate target of the Project". Then again it is stated that "it is the quality of human beings that makes a nation great".......... implying that the Community Projects will aim at improving the quality of human beings in the country. The Sarvodaya ideal stands for the greatest good of all and not only of the greatest number. The Constructive Programme aims not only at increase in agricultural produc-

tion but at full village reconstruction. The Plan does not indicate how it proposes to raise the quality of human beings in India. The Plan is one directed towards the material advancement of the people and the provision of amenities and conveniences. There is no stress on the moral re-generation of the people and on the cultivation by them of the nobler values of life. Can material advancement alone raise the quality of human beings?

3. The quality of the available personnel to be in charge of various items of work under the Community Projects may be improved upto a point by proper training. But for that the training itself must be under the guidance of those who are actuated by the spirit of service and who in their own lives can set the example for the people to follow. But it is laid down that the training of village level workers for the Community Projects will be carried out under a programme planned by the Indian-American Governments and the Ford Foundation. It is of the utmost importance that the training programme should be entrusted chiefly to those in India who fully know the background of Indian culture and who have themselves had long experience in the field of social service and education.

4. The Plan for the Community Projects does not deal with the problem of employment for the whole people. Employment for every one is one of the objects from which no Plan worth the name can run away. There is no mention of hand-spinning at all, though that is the one industry which can give employment to the largest number of people. As regards the development of industries the Plan leans unmistakably towards the introduction of power-driven machinery. This will not solve but only increase unemployment in the long run. The road-making programme is stressed to give employment. But the villages require many other things more urgently than roads. Roads in the Plan are those meant to connect the villages with urban areas. But it is the lanes inside the villages and the approaches to them that require to be attended to immediately. To do even this will be a huge task. To make good road connecting rural areas with urban areas may under the present conditions lead to further exploitation of the villages.

5. Among village industries, handloom weaving, *ghani*, leather and sugar-cane crushing are mentioned. But how long can these stand the competition from the power-driven industries, if they are not given protection in time? Will handlooms be protected from the competition of the power-looms? These questions find no answer in the Plan. These can be answered only by facing the whole question of cottage and village industries versus the mills and factories. It is of great importance to make clear how the conflict between man power and bullock power and the bigger power-driven machinery will be resolved.

6. More attention seems to be given to mandies and towns rather than to the villages. Till now the urban area has largely monopolized the attention of Governments. It is now, therefore, necessary that villages must be attended to even at the cost of the towns. In the estimates for a village unit, the allocation of funds for drinking water, drainage and education is very inadequate as compared with the provision made for roads, irrigation, reclamation etc. The scheme is based on the idea that one-third of the amenities already exist, one-third will be paid by the Government and the remaining one-third is to be furnished by the village itself. It is certainly necessary that the village must contribute its quota in labour and in money. But there should be no rigidity in the arrangement. The arrangement may well be that upto a certain limit the village will get double of what it contributes in kind, labour or cash. That will also be a test of how far the worker in charge has awakened the mind of the people and helped them to help themselves.

7. Primary education is proposed for all children. But there is no clear mention that it will be Basic Education, though it is said that preference will be given to the same. There is no reference at all to any radical change in middle and high school education.

8. There is only a casual reference to rural sanitation. But this is a matter of such fundamental importance that it will have to be included as a major item of work. It is not enough to furnish certain conveniences but is necessary to educate the people to change their bad habits and to properly utilize night-soil and urine for the preparation of compost manure.

Bathrooms should be attached to village wells and there should be provision for godowns for the storage of grain in each village.

9. In regard to agriculture itself, 3 out of the first 4 priorities in the agricultural programme are (1) reclamation of available virgin land, (2) development of rural electrification and (3) provision of commercial fertilizers. The last 2 in a list of 18 items are the encouragement of the use of natural manures and provision for the planting and care of forests. What India needs is an intensive campaign to increase her production per acre by feeding the soil with its natural foods and affording it protection against erosion. It would be wise to concentrate on small scale intensive agriculture and get the maximum fertility into our existing arable lands. This cannot be done by commercialized drives for quick money returns but only by hard work on the part of the farmer who loves his land and understands its needs. The scheme however puts the whole emphasis on heavy equipment, machinery and commercial fertilizers.

10. In spite of the mention made on the need of local initiative and co-operation the Plan is in fact an official undertaking, conceived, directed and largely financed from the top. There is no place in the administrative set up for the non-official except that he "might" be included in the "Advisory Board" of the local Project. But if development is to come up from the bottom consultation and planning must begin at the bottom. Projects locally initiated to meet local needs will be capable of being carried out largely with local talent and equipment and need not depend on expensive machinery or technique from outside. Such Projects, in which willing labour counts more than money, are the only ones which can be reproduced all over the country.

11. The general impression is that it is American money which is going to largely finance the Community Projects. The fact however is that American money will be less than rupees 450 lakhs and Indian money more than rupees 3,400 lakhs. Most of the American contribution will be in the shape of machinery, motor transport, equipment, chemical fertilizers etc. No doubt, these things are even now slowly getting into the villages, but when the Government will push them into these villages through the Community Projects on a rapid and extensive scale, the strain on village economy might become unbearable. The influx of numerous highly paid officials, incapable of indentifying themselves with village life, might hasten the process of demoralization which has already overtaken the villages through the impact of money economy and exploitation by big capital.

12. Under Gandhiji's guidance we in India have developed the technique of the Constructive Programme to give prosperity to the villages and to add self-reliance and therefore dignity to them. We do not believe that pouring big money from outside into the villages can really help the villages or continue except for a brief period. The whole approach underlying the Community Projects requires to be reconsidered. We think that the lines of development laid down by Gandhiji in the Constructive Programme are basically correct and sound for our country. So far, except one or two Provincial Governments, neither the Central nor the Provincial Governments have cared to actively help in working out the Constructive Programme. Now that the various Governments are coming forward to promote the Community Projects, which will cover a good part of the country, it is for them to study how far the items of the Constructive Programme are right and proper and are good enough to be fitted into their new programme.

HARIJAN

Oct. 11 1952

## STUDY OF ENGLISH

Prof. A. R. Wadia ex-Pro-Vice-Chancellor, M. S. University, Baroda, sends a copy of an open letter addressed to the Prime Minister of India, and the Ministers of Education at the Centre and in the States, "for publicity and comments". As the letter has appeared in the Daily Press, it need not be reproduced here.

The letter is signed by 26 persons among whom there are 8 Vice-Chancellors, four Ex-Vice-Chancellors and others, "intensely interested in the language problem facing the universities in India at the present day". That this question is hanging fire and that a keen controversy is going on both among academic and non-academic interests on our university bodies is clear even from the fact that not all university V.C.'s nor many more others have signed the letter, probably because they do not see eye to eye with the views and remarks contained in this communication. I mention this only to show that the question raised by the signatories is not so simple nor as easy as they appear to take it. And I may be pardoned if I add that their letter also fails to show the "grip of the real educational questions involved". And it almost neglects to note their equally important aspects if not more — I mean the far-reaching questions of our cultural and national well-being, which should not escape the eye of truly educational workers, and which are an integral part of any scheme of national education and its reconstruction. Unfortunately for our people, this aspect of education has wholly escaped from our orthodox and 'academic' ideas of English education in our country. The signatories fail to note that the real educational questions before us today are not merely of the language or of mere academic interests, but are more fundamental and vital than that. The real question is re-organization and re-orientation of the whole of our educational world, which has stultified itself on account of its inherent contradictions that become visible now, on the advent of democratic Swaraj in our country. As is aptly described, the present system is an inverted pyramid having no basis in the life and needs of the common man. The inverted nature is mainly due to the domineering position that English could arrogate to itself under foreign rule. It was not merely the language to be studied as one main, if not almost the only subject; but it was also required to be the medium of instruction at least from the High School onwards. Its study so dominates the whole vista of our instruction that what is without it is considered inferior education. The signatories, I hope, do not fondly believe that this outrage on a true scheme of education should continue any further. That they do not show any uneasiness about this state of affairs is a misfortune for us.

Again, the signatories and all those whom they represent do not still realize that English has not been a unifying force as they wish us to believe, but has been a cause of dividing the masses from the classes, and this has now been a source of weakness for our sound democratic growth. But this is said here not to argue that we should have no English henceforth. What is wanted is not removal of English altogether, but restoring it to its proper place. It might well be a subject of study in our schools, but that from our High School Std. VIII and never before that. The signatories seem to resent this sound principle of national educational reconstruction. They do not seem to note that a child in his Vth year of schooling now begins to study Hindi; and the national scheme of free and compulsory education for 7 years that the Constitution of India enjoins on all the States shall provide for at least 3 clear years of Hindi study from Std. V to Std. VII, unburdened by a third and a foreign language like English. Obviously English can come next which may be called the post-basic or secondary stage. This stage begins at the 8th Std. and not earlier. Do the signatories agree to this? If not, I am sorry to say that they have missed the A B C of educational reconstruction in our country. Their complaint against "the States Governments trying to reduce the quantum and quality of English taught in our high schools" is really born of this misconception.

Their second point re. the universities having their own entrance examination 'to test a student's knowledge of English' is born of a further misconception regarding the place of post-basic or secondary education in a sound system of national education. This stage is not English-teaching preparatory stage for the university. It is not a mere feeder for the English-ridden universities of today. It has to be a second unit in further education, a second stage on a stable pyramid based on the first 7 years of the national scheme. The universities need not and cannot any more dictate from above and stultify the growth of the nation's youth in the manner they have been doing till now.

Again the signatories, it seems, are not concerned about how to achieve the change-over from English to Hindi and/or the great regional languages. Otherwise they would have tried to plan for this change-over and shown how and where English should have its due place, according to them. Such a transition is inevitable; and it must be faced, of course, with the least possible trouble and uneasiness.

To sum up, the question before us is not the old educational order and its maintenance any how, but, as I said at the beginning, its reconstruction as per needs of the new age which Swaraj has brought us to. It is an opportunity which we can miss only with peril to our progress and only if we are in favour of the *status quo* which is bad enough.

24-9-'52 MAGANBHAI P. DESAI

## PATIL-MASHRUWALA CORRESPONDENCE

[Shri R. K. Patil, member of the Planning Commission, wrote a long letter on the 5-6th August last to Shri Kishorlalbhai, not as a reply to his articles regarding 'Shri Patil's Apprehensions' about Vinobaji's *Bhoodan Yajna*, but to have further clarification of his views regarding land-problems. Shri Kishorlalbhai, while giving a very detailed and comprehensive reply, wrote a brief but brilliant and thorough exposition of his ideology of decentralization. In the thesis is revealed not only the courage of his keen intellect, but his over-flowing love and sympathy for our toiling and impoverished cultivators. In a way it is his vision of future India, not only politically free, but free economically and socially also. Shri Patil's letter and Shri Kishorlalbhai's reply are proposed to be published in suitable instalments, here in the hope that the readers, especially the constructive workers, will get fresh light and inspiration therefrom. The following is Shri Patil's letter to Shri Kishorlalbhai. The first instalment of his reply will be given in the next issue. — N. P.]

### I

### Shri Patil's Queries

Planning Commission,
Govt. of India, New Delhi,
Dated, 5-6 August, 1952

My dear Kishorlalbhai,

I am writing this letter primarily to ascertain from you, your views about the nature of our future rural society, and particularly its organization with reference to the cultivation of village land. If there are any references to your articles in the *Harijan*, and particularly those in which you have dealt with my apprehensions about Vinobaji's Bhoodan Yajna, they may please be treated as incidental and necessary to such ascertainment, and not as a reply to your articles. I want to know your views particularly as we have reached a stage in our thinking of the problem, where we see little light, and I thought perhaps in the process of writing this letter and obtaining your views, some points may get cleared.

2. In planning we have always to keep in view the final picture of society as one visualizes it, and plans for it. Of course many intermediate steps may be necessary to reach the final stage, and the short-term steps may be necessitated by urgent economic and political considerations. But in all such cases, one has to relate these steps to the final objective and be clear in one's mind how one proposes to reach it. Obviously short-term steps must not be in conflict with the long-term objectives.

3. Though you do not want to be dogmatic on the point, your view from the articles in the *Harijan* dated 16-9-'50, 17-2-'51 and 17-3-'51 appears to be against individual proprietary right in land. You envisage a system under which all village land will be regarded as one single unit, of which each present owner is a share-holder to the extent of the crop-value of his fields. A small plot should be assigned to each cultivating family for 'hobby cultivation'. The rest of the land is to be cultivated as village land. The cropping should be according to the needs of the village and the produce must cover (a) the full maintenance of the population for at least 15 months, (b) payment of wages in addition to food to wage-earners, (c) payment of dues to Government including levy, etc. You also envisage payment of dividends to share-holders after making allowances for public hygiene, sanitation, schools, roads, etc. This is in recognition of ownership right in land and these could be transferred, without involving any physical division of land.

4. It thus appears that you envisage a system in which ownership is recognized, and paid for, though being the last item, the payment would be only nominal at least for some years till agriculture is developed. You also envisage wage-earners who have no interest in the ownership of land, though of course they must be paid 'Full' wages. That is the existing owners and agricultural labourers should manage the land in the just interest of both, and you would not necessarily require that each person who works on the land must necessarily own it or have an ownership interest in the land of the village.

5. If a Co-operative or a Panchayat were to work this system, there will have to be an authority guiding the cultivation in the village, and all the cultivating workers would have to accept the guidance of this authority. Alternately the Co-operative or the Panchayat may divide the village land into small units and make over these units to individual families for cultivation, on their making available to the Panchayat, a certain payment, out of which all the dues in para 3 could be paid. But the agricultural workers in the first case and the family units in the other case will have to follow the general directions given by the Panchayat.

6. This is precisely the method under which the Co-operative Village Management will work in the beginning. In addition, it will be under an obligation to find work for people in the village who cannot be employed in cultivation, because there are already too many people on the land. That is such people may engage in Khadi production or oil production, etc., and exchange their goods for food. After the ownership dividend is abolished, the cultivators would be the owners of land. And there would be only two classes, cultivators and artisans. As the economy develops, and other more paying avenues of employment can be found for the village people, there will be migration from the village and the pressure on the land is reduced, and the standard of the remaining people in the village slowly improves.

7. Till the village could have such a system of management, it was to have a Village Production Council whose functions are as given at p. 88-89 of the Draft Outline. Your objection to all this is as follows :

"Thus the Planning Commission prefers cultivation by paid labour directly under officers either of the village management, or the proprietors of registered farms, or co-operative farming societies to cultivation by agriculturists as free individuals. The principle that land must belong to the actual tiller is rejected."

You then proceed to criticize and differentiate the Co-operative Societies as envisaged by the Commission from the Sarvodaya conception.

8. I have three questions to ask :

(i) Is the final conception of Co-operative Village Management, the same as your idea of village organization through a Co-operative or Panchayat ? If not, where lies the difference ?

(ii) What would be the stages in which you propose to reach this conception in our present circumstances ? The Commission had suggested registered farms and development of co-operatives, but for the sake of argument, I will concede that they are open to some objections.

(iii) How would you visualize the functions and authority of the Village Panchayat and Co-operatives so that they would not be open to the objections that you have taken about Co-operatives or Joint Village Management ? Co-operatives must obviously function through officials and co-operation involves the loss of individual freedom in the interest of the group.

9. I might add that this conception of yours that the village lands should be managed jointly and no individual should be entitled to own any particular part of it is in conformity with modern and advanced economic ideas on the subject. Such a large unit of management not only enables the village resources to be utilized in an optimum way, but it also facilitates the application of capital and modern scientific knowledge quickly to our agricultural conditions. This does not mean that even with such management our farming will not be intensive. There is really no organic connection between the size of the farm and the mode of cultivation, i.e., extensive or intensive. Larger units of cultivation do not necessarily mean that there would be employment for only a smaller number of people than in a system of small individual holdings. It might be possible to employ even more people in a large unit than if the same land were divided into small units. It is, of course, true that there is a very severe pressure on land today and that it will manifest itself in some way or other however the cultivation of land is organized, but the real issue is which system will relieve that pressure in the shortest possible time. The pressure has to be relieved by creating more employment in agriculture, in industries organized on a cottage and small-scale basis, and in tertiary occupations. All this pre-supposes the creation of a larger surplus for investment in the economy, and it is comparatively very difficult, if not impossible, to achieve this when agriculture is organized on the basis of small, uneconomic farms.

Much of the confusion on this subject arises because the issues are discussed in very general terms of the economies of large-scale cultivation, and the scope for intensive small-scale cultivation without specifying the desirable size of the unit in either case or the conditions requisite to their success. There is no organic connection or relationship between the size of a farm and the character of cultivation whether intensive or extensive. One can have intensive cultivation on a large farm, and small farms need not necessarily be intensively cultivated. Similarly, extensive cultivation beyond a point need not yield any extra economies, and this point may come fairly early in the process of extension if there is either a lack of the necessary managerial and technical skill or if there are very real obstacles to mechanization. It is, therefore, a question of deciding the optimum size of cultivation taking all factors into account, including the incentives of peasant farming, the necessity for introducing new techniques, the economies of large-scale, the limitations on mechanization, the scope for intensive cultivation based on availability of irrigation and manure, etc. This is a matter of judgment, but, on the whole, it would appear that under the conditions obtaining in India today, there is a case for enlarging rather than diminishing the size of the unit.

I believe these are also Vinoba's views as appears from his reference to a Gokul and your reference to it in your last article on my apprehensions.

9A. The next question is how do we reach this stage and what are the intervening stages ? It is granted that there is a pressing necessity of creating a large amount of employment in the rural areas and the question has to be reviewed from this angle in the immediate future. It will also, I think, be considered that Co-operative Village Management is the quickest way of creating a large amount of rural employment. In fact, the scheme put forward by Shri Jugatram Dave proceeds on this basis. Therein, he has assumed payment of full compensation at market rates for the land. But it is only because we feel that there is no immediate prospect of establishing a scheme of Co-operative Village Management that we must look to some other method or procedure.

10. The only other solution is a scheme of land distribution. I state for your information the supposed objections to a scheme of land distribution and how they can be met.

The main arguments against the policy of land distribution may be summarized as follows :

(a) It will increase the number of uneconomic holders and will be a step further away from our objective to have a larger unit of cultivation.

(b) It will lead to a fall in production and the marketable surplus.

(c) It will lead to a withdrawal of investment from agriculture.

(d) The administrative complications of land distribution would be so great that it will not be possible to undertake such a programme without detriment to other developmental activities and the immediate objective of achieving self-sufficiency in food.

(e) The land available for distribution will be so little that we may be able to satisfy the demand for land of only a very small section of the people. In this event the ceiling will have to be progressively reduced, which would affect a larger number of existing holders and thus ultimately create more instability.

Let us consider these objections in detail.

(a) The surplus land made available after the imposition of a ceiling need not necessarily be distributed in uneconomic units. It could be distributed in economic units to groups of persons who are in a position to cultivate it effectively. The experience of land distribution in connection with Acharya Vinoba's Bhoodan Yajna in Hyderabad supports this conclusion. In undertaking such a scheme the land-man ratio can be kept at such a level as will enable his family to obtain at least a bare living.

Besides, such a course need not take us away from our objective of having a larger unit of cultivation. Apart from the fact that land distribution programme need not increase the number of uneconomic units, the goodwill generated by this move could be canalized in inducing the beneficiaries to come together in small groups of producers' co-operatives, and increase their unit of cultivation, or, at least, have certain auxiliaries to more efficient production in common ownership. It might also become possible to organize co-operative societies on a village scale for all non-farm activities like credit, supplies, marketing, etc. Progress in these directions is in any case necessary, and land reform will help rather than hinder the process.

(b) The second objection is that such a course will lead to a fall in production and the marketable surplus. While the possibility of such a result happening cannot be discounted, it cannot be stated that the type of land distribution indicated above would necessarily lead to such a result. In fact, in so far as the surplus is taken from such cultivators as, because of their large holdings, are unable to pay personal attention to their lands, there is a possibility of increasing production by the distribution of their surplus land. Greater incentive for increasing production will be brought to bear on the cultivation of these lands. And such lands may form a large proportion of the surpluses taken over. Further to guard against the fall in production and the marketable surplus, it could be provided that the new allottees of land should make to the Government (or the village body, as the case may be) their annual instalments of payment for the land allotment partly or wholly in the shape of grain. Such a levy will induce them to put their best efforts at cultivating the land and raising the output.

(c) It has been said that redistribution will lead to a withdrawal of investment from agriculture. But even today, conditions are so uncertain that there is hardly any fresh investment going into agriculture. The whole atmosphere is surcharged with apprehensions about the next step in the land sector. As long as the agitation for distribution continues (and over this we have no control), the tendency will be to reduce rather than increase the commitments on land as far as the larger holdings are concerned. Until the issue is settled in a way which suggests that there will be no further disturbance to property relations in this sector in the near future, we shall probably have the worst of both worlds. Some measure of contraction in working capital may perhaps be inevitable as a result of dispossessing the larger holders of land, but it will not be of the order that is sometimes suggested. Working capital is in the last analysis required mainly for employing labour, purchasing seeds and manures, etc. To a great extent the working capital now employed for hiring labour will be effectively replaced by the direct application of manpower under peasant proprietorship.

(d) The next objection taken is that the administrative complications of land distribution will be so great that it will not be possible to undertake such a programme without detriment to other developmental activities. There is considerable force in this objection, but if a policy decision is called for on merits, it is better taken and implemented at an early stage even from the point of view of development. The real decision to be taken is the necessity for such a step.

(e) Lastly, it has been argued that the land available for distribution will be so little that we may be able to satisfy the demand for land of only a small section of the landless rural population and that, in consequence, the ceiling would have to be progressively reduced under pressure. This is indeed an important and valid objection. There would be no point in imposing a ceiling if the surplus land thus made available for distribution is negligible. If this leads to frequent downward adjustments of the ceiling, it would be a source of considerable instability and would in fact take away much of the economic and political value of land reform of this kind. The answer is that, in fixing the ceiling even in the first instance, care must be taken to see that it is neither so high as to yield only a small surplus for distribution nor so low as to affect middle peasants. This is a matter which can be judged only in relation to conditions in each area — as a rule, no land which yields an income of less than Rs 300/- per year should be allotted to any individual and the ceiling should be fixed at five to six times this amount — but the practicability of determining a ceiling which answers these requirements cannot itself be doubted. Broadly speaking, a policy of land distribution as visualized here will not affect more than 10 per cent

of the cultivated land and, therefore, 90 per cent of the land and its possessors will be unaffected.

11. And yet we must be quite clear that we are embarking on a scheme of land distribution because we cannot establish quickly and in a democratic way the scheme of Co-operative Village Management over a substantial area in the country; and we cannot wait till this is achieved. But land distribution does not absolve us from our responsibility of establishing Co-operative Village Management for the whole village. Indeed as land distribution might touch 10 to 12 per cent of our total occupied area, we have to take steps to strengthen the co-operative movement over the whole rural sector till the whole village enters into C. V. M. How can we speed up this process? Can you give any new ideas to achieve this?

12. Do you agree that in the present circumstances land distribution is the next step? Do you agree that it will have to be a sufficiently wide distribution, if the possibility of creating fresh pressures for land distribution in a few years is to be avoided? The possibility of such pressures would lead to great instability and confusion in the rural areas. If you have land distribution once, it must be such as to obviate the necessity of having it again. For this purpose, it will have to be sufficiently liberal.

13. Do you think such a large-scale distribution could be carried out in the country in a peaceful manner? Even then, it would not give land to all the landless, but to about half their present landless population; the remaining will have to remain without land, but special steps will have to be taken to see that they have a living.

14. In the closing part of your article, you have said that 'agriculture will not stand alone, it will have to be married to handicrafts and village industries'. How do you visualize this marriage? Concretely, what industries can an agricultural family engage into? Off-hand we cannot think of anything else except grinding, paddy husking and spinning. And even these would be largely on the basis of self-sufficiency and not as providing subsidiary sources of income. Weaving, oil-pressing would be ordinarily whole-time occupations. Do you consider that it would be possible for an agricultural family to engage in agriculture and also engage in other industries besides those indicated above? If so, will not agriculture suffer? And if this is possible today, will it be so, when agriculture develops? I should have thought that agriculture will have to be an industry by itself yielding sufficient income for the maintenance of a family. In agriculture, I include dairying, poultry and bee-keeping. Other industries will have to be carried on in the village as independent professions by families who do not engage in agriculture except as labourers in the peak season.

An early reply is requested.

Yours sincerely,
R. K. PATIL

## BHOODAN YAJNA IN KERALA

Shri E. Ikkanda Warrier, the Convener of the Kerala Bhoodana Yajna Samiti writes as follows:

The Central Office of the Samiti was opened in Trichur. For purposes of organization Kerala is divided into six Districts, viz., South Malabar, North Malabar, Cochin, Kottayam, Quilon and Trivandrum. Two District Conferences were held, one in South Malabar at Palghat and the other in Cochin at Trichur. Invitations for a similar Conference in Kottayam have been issued for the 29th of this month.

Besides explaining "the why and how" of this movement to the public and the workers, District and Taluk Committees were appointed and the route of Shri Shankarrao Deo's tour so far as it runs through these Districts was fixed at these Conferences.

Six thousand copies of a Malayalam translation of Shri Vinobaji's Appeal dated 28-4-1952 have been published. This is being circulated throughout Kerala. One thousand copies of an appeal issued by the Convener were also printed and broadcast. A few pamphlets are under preparation.

Mahakavi Vallathole has contributed a poem calling upon the people to give their help and co-operation to this movement intended to ameliorate the sad lot of the landless labourers in the country.

25-9-'52


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